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TO THE

TRADESMEN, FARMERS, SHOPKEEPERS,

AND

COUNTRY PEOPLE IN GENERAL

OF THE

KINGDOM OF IRELAND.

K. Farmer.

DUBLIN:
1797.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

TRADESMEN, FARMERS, SHOPKEEPERS,

&c. &c.

Brethren, Friends, Countrymen, and Fellow Subjects,

I HAVE read a good many papers in print that were written for your uſe, but I cannot ſay that any of them were ſuch as I quite liked:—They were all written by ſcholars, who make uſe of hard words and fine ſayings, that I, for my part, do not always rightly underſtand. I, who wiſh now to ſay a few words to you, am a farmer like ſome of yourſelves, and though no ſcholar, and not quite ignorant either; for I have read in my life-time a good deal of ſuch things as fall in the way of people in my way of life (I mean hiſtories and magazines, and many other things in Engliſh) and I have been always fond of thinking of what I have read. I wiſh then now to tell you ſome of my thoughts, as far as they regard your own ſituation and the preſent times, and I hope you will read what I ſay with ſome care, for I am certainly your friend, and wiſh you well, both becauſe I truſt I am a good chriſtian, and becauſe, as I am one of yourſelves, what will hurt you, will hurt me alſo, I would therefore be very glad to do you good, and keep you from harm, if it is in my power.

It is very plain that there are people ſtriving all they can to make a ſtir, and raiſe troubles in

this our beloved country. Now, it is a very ſerious thing to throw a whole kingdom into confuſion, and to make it a ſcene of wars, bloodſhed, and deſolation. Every honeſt, well-meaning perſon, therefore, ſhould conſider well what theſe perſons are about, and what is the object they have in view. They tell you, to be ſure, that it is all for your good, and too many of you, I am afraid, are fools enough to believe them; but if you had read as much of the hiſtories of old times, and thought about them as much as I have done, you would ſoon know that all they want is to make themſelves great men. Now they know they have no chance of doing this without your help, and ſo they tell you that they are ſuch kind and generous ſouls, that all they want is to make you happy; and you are ſuch innocent and ſimple ſouls as to believe them. May God Almighty give you better underſtanding, and more knowledge of the world and mankind. Their firſt ſtep then is to make you think yourſelves unhappy; and this is no hard matter to do, becauſe that in truth you are unhappy. But then, my good friends, be aſſured of one thing, that all the world is unhappy, from the king to the beggar; and it is a great doubt with me, and with wiſer heads than mine, whether you are not really leſs unhappy than any body elſe. But that is not the queſtion now; all we want to enquire into here is, whether, if you are unhappy, you are likely to be made happier by what theſe men are doing, and ſtriving to make you do. It is worth your while to conſider this matter well before you let yourſelves be drawn into any raſh or fooliſh, or dangerous, or wicked undertaking, leſt that, while you are trying to be happy, you ſhould make yourſelves

ten times more miſerable than you are now told you are.

You have all ſenſe enough to know what is really for your good, when it is properly explained to you; but, becauſe you are more uſed to working than to thinking, and to employing your hands than your heads, you ſometimes let yourſelves be too eaſily perſuaded by bad men, or, at leaſt, fooliſh men, that a thing is for your good, which is a great deal more likely to do you hurt, and if you take a little time to think and conſider, you would ſoon perceive that what you are now adviſed to, can never do you any good, either in this world or the next, whatever miſchief it may do you in both.

You are told, that by robbing and murdering, and bringing wars and troubles on our native country, you will get a reform of parliament, and have lands cheap, and high wages, and that you will have no tythes nor taxes to pay, and, in ſhort, that you will be all great and rich men. By the way, they might as well tell you, that they would make you wings, and teach you to fly, and get eſtates in the moon, for one is as poſſible as the other.

But now, my countrymen, let us conſider together like people of common ſenſe, that won't be made fools of, nor do any thing hand over head, what is the nature of theſe mighty advantages you are promiſed.

As to a reform of parliament, do you know what it is? I am ſure a great many of you do not; and if you do, you cannot tell what good it would do, or whether it would do any good at all. But one thing is pretty certain, that not a man of you, to whom I am now ſpeaking, would be one bit the better for it. Believe it my friends, reform of parliament is only a word theſe

people have ſent abroad to ſpirit you up, to help them in their deſigns, and ſome of them have confeſſed as much themſelves. They think they muſt have ſomething to halloo you at, and they find reform of parliament anſwers their purpoſe nicely. They are fine ſounding words, and the leſs you underſtand them the better, becauſe then you will fancy it to be ſomething very great, which will make you rich and happy; whereas it is very uncertain whether the country would not be the worſe for it, and it is very certain you would not be the better.

We will now talk of lowering the rent of lands, and raiſing wages. It is flat nonſenſe to talk of doing both theſe things together; for how can wages be high, when thoſe who pay them receive low rents for their land. We all know that when lands were cheap in former times, wages were very low. In my own memory, (and I am not a very old man) wages have doubled, or nearly doubled, in many parts of Ireland, and the reaſon of it is, becauſe lands have riſen; and, I think, it can be proved to you, though wages don't *ſeem* to have riſen as much in proportion as land has, that you on the whole are better off now than you were when land was cheaper. By what I can learn from the oldeſt people in my neighbourhood, potatoe land was at three pound an acre at the time that wages were from five-pence to ſix-pence; or, to take the middle price, at five-pence-halfpenny a day. In the ſame neighbourhood now, potatoe land is from five to ſix-pounds an acre. We will take the middle price then, and call it five-pound ten-ſhillings, and wages there now are from eight-pence to ten-pence, and the middle price of courſe nine-pence; ſo that the riſe upon potatoe land is two-pound ten ſhillings the acre, and the

riſe

riſe of wages is three-pence-halfpenny a day, which, if a man works 250 days in the year, makes, I believe, three-pounds, twelve-ſhillings, and eleven-pence. Now the quantity of land which a labourer requires for his potatoe garden, is generally half an acre, for which he pays one pound, five ſhillings, more than in former times; but if he does, he has an advance of three pounds, twelve ſhillings, and eleven pence, on his labour, which, I think, ſhews what I ſaid before, that you are better off now than you were when land was cheaper.

You ſhould conſider that what makes ground dear is, that there is a great deal more money now in the kingdom than formerly, and alſo a great deal more people. If meat is brought to the market, and there are only five men to buy it, with little money in their pockets, they muſt get it for little money; but, if there were twenty men with their purſes full, they would, of courſe, pay more for it, ſince they would bid againſt each other rather than not have it. It is juſt the ſame with regard to land. Even you now have twice as much money in your pockets as labouring people had in former times, and there are a great many more of you; ſo that you muſt pay more for it; becauſe, that if one does not give it, another will.

Conſider now what would happen, if the price of lands was all at once made a great deal leſs than it is, every one who had money would be for taking all he could, and he would never let it again, becauſe he could get no profit rent; he would farm it therefore himſelf, or put ſtock on it, and then all thoſe who had leaſt money, would not be able to get a ſingle rood, and of courſe muſt ſtarve, or go beg. But the truth is, that the people who put theſe things into your heads,

know

know very well, that while the ſame quantity of money is in the country, and the ſame number of people, lands muſt remain at the ſame price, and (as people, and trade, and induſtry, and of courſe money, encreaſe,) muſt even riſe higher and higher; but they talk to you in this way, ſtill farther to make fools of you, and to deceive you into their deſigns, (as the people who now are kings in France have done there) for they know very well that you, from your way of life, muſt be entirely ignorant of theſe matters, and are therefore eaſy to be impoſed upon, and they care very little how many of you are hanged, and tranſported, and ſhot, and bayoneted, and ſtarved, and how many of your wives and daughters are raviſhed, and of your families reduced to beggary, provided they can make themſelves great, and rich, and powerful, at your expence.

Another advantage you are to get is, that you are to pay little or no taxes. I believe no people upon earth pay leſs taxes than you do, for the protection that goverment gives to every man in his perſon and property. If any one does you wrong, you have aſſizes, and ſeſſions, and law courts, and judges, and magiſtrates, to go to; your ſea coaſts are protected from pirates and ſea robbers, and the inland parts from troops of banditti; all which would rob, and plunder and murder every where, if it were not for the watchful care, and great power of government. Conſider now how little, how very little you pay for all this, and for all the other uſes that government is of to you and your country, and which you cannot be a judge of, becauſe, from your way of life, you cannot be at all knowing in ſuch matters. But, for goodneſs ſake, don't let yourſelves be made quite fools

of

of by theſe people. If they ſucceed in what they are driving at, be aſſured that you will be made to pay a great deal more taxes than you do now. Such wicked ſchemes cannot be carried on without money; and that I believe you all well know to your coſt, for you have already taxed yourſelves pretty highly, in order to be enabled to go evēn as far as you have done in rebellion and treaſon, in treachery, and murder and robbery; But if you were to go ſtill farther and farther, you muſt pay ſtill more and more, particularly as, if the whole kingdom is in trouble and confuſion, there can be little or no trade, ſo that there will be little or no money got at the cuſtom houſes, where now a great deal is received for the uſes of government; and, as more money will be wanting to carry on rebellion than peaceable government, means will be found to make you pay it.

We will now come to another of the advantages they promiſe you, which is, that you ſhall pay no tythes. And what would you be the better for that? Do you think that it is the people who farm the land that pay the tythes? No, truly. The tythes are in fact paid by the eſtated men, who undoubtedly, though you don't perceive it, make you pay one tenth-leſs than the value, becauſe they know the tythe belongs to neither you nor them; So that if you will but conſider the matter as you ought to do, you will find that you are in reality gainers by the tythes. The landed men ſet you their land one-tenth under the value, as ſaid before, but as you do not pay one-tenth, nor one-fifteenth part to the clergy, you are clear gainers of as much as you pay them leſs than the tenth part. Suppoſe you were buying ten barrels of potatoes, and that you told the man who ſold them, that he

he ought to make ſome allowance, becauſe there were a great many bad and rotten ones among them, if then he allowed you the price of one barrel, and made you pay for nine only inſtead of ten, and that when you came to pick them, you found there were only half a barrel bad ones, you would of courſe get the other half barrel for nothing. It is juſt the ſame with regard to tythes.

But now let us talk a little of tythes in general. They neither belong to you nor the eſtated men. They got their lands, and you rent them, on the condition of paying tythes; therefore it is no more fair to complain of them, than it would be in a wine merchant to complain of the taxes he pays at the cuſtom-houſe, becauſe he knew very well that he muſt pay them when he went into the trade. There is not one of you but would be very glad to get 100 acres of land tomorrow, on condition of paying the tythe, and if afterwards you refuſed to pay it, you would be very juſtly called rogues and ſcoundrels. Now this very bargain was in fact made a long time ago with all thoſe who now have lands here, and becauſe it was made ſo very long ago, and that it was done for the ſervice of religion, it muſt be looked upon as more ſacred; and of courſe, all who now ſtrive not to pay the tythe according to their bargain, are neither more nor leſs than ſacrilegious rogues and ſcoundrels. Suppoſe government were to take the tythes into their own hands, they would ſurely make you pay the full tenth, and after paying the clergy as much as they get now, they would have a large overplus for other purpoſes; but you would after all be great ſufferers by it; and yet certainly government have an undoubted right to do it.

Another

Another thing you are told by theſe ſame people is, that all your parliament men and governors, are very good-for-nothing fellows, and that if you will turn them out, and put the others in their place, all will be right and well. I can hardly ſuppoſe that, when they talk to you in that ſtile, you do any thing but laugh in their face. However, I will tell you a piece of the hiſtory of old times, which is much to the purpoſe: There was formerly a nation called Capua, where the people were told as you are now, that their governors were great raps, and ſhould be all turned out, or hanged, or God knows what. The people, good, eaſy ſouls, let themſelves be eaſily perſuaded by cunning men, and accordingly away they went in a body, and ſurrounded the ſenate-houſe, where the great men were met together about the affairs of the ſtate. They determined to take every man of them, and turn him out by the ſhoulders, and put others in their place. But there happened to be a man in the crowd, who was a little wiſer than the reſt, and he begged they would hear what he had to ſay before they began their work. So, ſilence being proclaimed, he ſaid to them, "My lads, I agree with you entirely, that our governors are very good-for-nothing fellows; but I know you will alſo agree with me, that before we throw away dirty water, we ought to get clean; or, in plain language, before we diſmiſs theſe governors, we ought to chooſe others; for you all know, that a government we muſt have."

To be ſure, to be ſure, they all cried out with one voice.

"Well then, (ſaid he) let us begin with the firſt man, or the preſident, and name one to preſide in his place; what do you all think of John Robinſon?"

John Robinſon! cried out a hundred voices at once, he is fifty times worſe than the preſent man. No, no, we will not have him; but there is James Thompſon, whom no one can ſay a word againſt.

James Thompſon! cried out a hundred other voices on the other ſide, there is not a viler fellow in the world; we will never vote for him: Andrew Farrel for ever, ſay we.

No Andrew Farrel, no Andrew Farrel, roared out a number of other voices; he ought to be hanged inſtead of being made preſident.

Then another, another, and another was named to the number of above twenty, and all were objected to in the ſame manner by ſome party or other.

Upon this, the firſt ſpeaker begged to be heard again, and ſaid to them, "You ſee, my lads, how it is, no two parties of us can agree even in chooſing a preſident, what then would be the caſe if we were to attempt chooſing the whole aſſembly? I will tell you, we ſhould all fall together by the ears, and cut one anothers throats. The fault is not in our preſent governors, for you ſee we can't hit upon better, but in the world and mankind. It is not they only that want to be reformed, but you and I, and all our countrymen. I am afraid we are all as good-for-nothing fellows as our governors; ſo if you will follow my advice, you will e'en take up with what you have, and not let yourſelves be perſuaded to turn them out by a parcel of cunning rogues, who would fain get into their places if they could." A word to the wiſe, my countrymen.

But, I have now talked of the advantages which theſe people ſay you will get, if you will only be ſo kind as to let them lead you by the

the noſe in all their plots and and plans; and you ſee what ſort of advantages they are, even ſuppoſing they were to be come at, which however is not ſo eaſy a matter. But, let us take it for granted that you could obtain them all, and that they are as fine things as is pretended, you will then conſider well, if you are wiſe, at what price they are to be purchaſed. I am no great man at figures and accounts, but I know enough of the matter to be ſatisfied, that he is a very great fool indeed, who does not conſider what he is likely to loſe as well as gain by any bargain or purchaſe. Now, we have already ſeen what it is pretended that you may hope to gain, ſo let us now enquire into the loſs. Firſt, you may loſe your lives. Many of you have done ſo already, and many thouſands more will do ſo, if you go on as you are doing. The ſword, the bayonet, the firelock, the cannon, the gallows, and famine alſo will deſtroy multitudes of you. Many will loſe their limbs, and many more their health, and perhaps all their liberties, for in that way do ſuch troubles, as you are ſtriving to cauſe, almoſt always end. Your wives would be left to beg, and your children to ſtarve; and you muſt aſſuredly love your wives and children, for the very brutes love their companions and their young. Your country, which I am ſure we all love, would ſuffer a blow from which it would not recover for a long, long time. Its trade, its farming, its manufactures would be ruined, and after all, I am ſure and certain, that it is fifty to one that you, or your leaders rather, would be baulked in all their fine ſchemes into the bargain. Suppoſe there were two honeſt, able men, that had ſtrength and health to earn bread for themſelves and children, and that a third cunning knave was to ſay to them, " My lads, you

are very unhappy, but if you will be ſaid and led by me, I will ſoon make you happy; you have nothing to do but, (while I ſtay here) to go and rob your rich neighbour John; then bring the money to me, and leave me to manage it, in order that I may make you happy." Now, if theſe two men were to attack their neighbour John's houſe, without ever conſidering whether they might not be killed in the attempt, or, if they eſcaped being ſhot there, whether they might not be hanged afterwards, and damned beſides to all eternity; and if, (ſuppoſing they got the money) they were to give it up to their adviſer to manage for them, in order to make them happy, would they not be the greateſt of all fools? This, however, my friends, is very nearly what you are doing. There is one difference indeed, but it is not at all in your favour. The two men might poſſibly eſcape being ſhot at neighbour John's, but of you, undoubtedly, great numbers muſt be maimed and killed, and otherwiſe deſtroyed, let the event of the buſineſs be what it will. Therefore, if you let yourſelves be made tools and fools of by men who want to be great, but tell you they only want to make you happy, without ever conſidering in your own minds what may happen to you either in this world, or the world to come, I will tell you, and I am certain I ſpeak the truth, you are the greateſt idiots that ever breathed.

I wiſh now to ſay a few words to your wives, ſome of whom, I am told, make themſelves very buſy in theſe matters, encouraging you to go on, and even going along with you in your lawleſs expeditions. What they are looking for by their doings, it is very hard to ſay, unleſs they wiſh that themſelves and their children ſhould be left widows and orphans. Some of them,

them, I verily believe, wiſh to be raviſhed in the general confuſion they are doing their beſt to bring about; and others, to be ſure, have a mind to get new huſbands, when thoſe they now have, are killed out of the way; but all this is no reaſon that you, my countrymen, ſhould let yourſelves be made fools of by them, and perſuaded to be aiding and aſſiſting them in their vile ſchemes and deſires.

What I have ſaid ſo far, is to all the people in general; but I have a few words to ſay beſides to the farmers, tradeſmen, and ſhopkeepers in particular, for, I hear, that many of them are well-wiſhers to what is going on, and do all they can to forward it. Now, can there be in nature greater abſurdity, folly, and madneſs, than ſuch conduct? What will become of them and their ſhops, and their trade, and their farming, when the whole country is thrown into confuſion? Don't they know there will be little or no money ſtirring? Don't they know that many of their beſt cuſtomers will either fly the country, or hide their money? Don't they know that they will be robbed and pillaged by all parties? Don't they know, in ſhort, that peace and quietneſs are abſolutely neceſſary for thriving in their buſineſs? That people ſhould be ſo blind to their own intereſt, cannot be accounted for otherwiſe than by ſuppoſing that it is the devil who blinds them, in order to drive them to deſtruction.

Some years ago this kingdom certainly had many things to complain of, but almoſt all the real grievances that either the nation in general, or any particular portion of its inhabitants ſuffered, have been removed; and, I will affirm, that if you and your leaders do not ſucceed in your diabolical attempts to bring on wars and troubles, it will from this time forward improve rapidly

rapidly in wealth and proſperity, and true liberty, and all the inhabitants of a country that enjoys ſuch bleſſings, muſt feel the benefits of them from the richeſt to the pooreſt.

One would think that what has happened in France, ought to make every man of common ſenſe, and common goodneſs, very cautious how he diſturbed the eſtabliſhed government of his country. The former government of France was no more to be compared to ours than a ſchool with its maſter at its head, armed with rods, and ſticks, and ſcourges, can be compared to our houſes of parliament, with their ſpeakers in the chair; nor can the preſent government of France be any more compared to ours, than the ſame ſchool boys turned looſe to rob orchards, plunder hen rooſts, hunt poultry, and fight and beat each other's eyes out, can be compared to the ſame houſes of parliament. Under the former government of France, any one might be deprived of his property, liberty, and life, by the will of one man, without trial, and without even knowing for what he ſuffered; but, notwithſtanding this, and their many other grievances, I am ſatisfied there is not in that whole country an honeſt good man, who would not rather have their old government again, than have been witneſs of all the cruel murders and horrible ſlaughter, the wicked infernal actions, and of all the miſery and calamity that have been the conſequences of the change. Under their old government, a few people were diſtreſſed and ill treated;—under the new, millions and millions have been oppreſſed and perſecuted; and we have heard of little elſe but want, and cruelty, and miſery, and tyranny, and bloodſhed at home and abroad.

It is extraordinary, and melancholy, to think on, that the greateſt diſcontent, and diſpoſition to rebellion, and to make our poor country a ſcene of war, and ſlaughter, and famine and diſtreſs, is in that part of Ireland which is the moſt rich and flouriſhing. I fear that looks as if we of this kingdom were not as well able to bear proſperity as our neighbours, for whenever we wax fat, we kick; ſo that, I am much afraid, that God Almighty will never give us proſperity, but let us be always under oppreſſion and ſlavery, and poverty, as a puniſhment of our ſins and ingratitude. When we had little liberty and great poverty, we were quiet, peaceable, good ſubjects, but now that we have got much liberty, and encreaſing wealth, we think of nothing but treaſon and rebellion, and wars and deſtruction. May God Almighty give us a better underſtanding, and turn from thoſe evils that I fear we too well deſerve.

I have now told you ſome of my thoughts on this buſineſs. A great deal more might be ſaid even by me; and ſcholars, I am ſure, could write whole books about it; but enough has been already ſaid to put you on your guard, and make you think a little, and look before you leap. One word to the wiſe, you know, is as good as ten thouſand; and he muſt be a great fool indeed, who is not wiſe enough to avoid going into the fire, when he is told that the fire is juſt before him; or who is headſtrong enough to take a great leap, though he is aſſured that by ſo doing he will be ſwallowed up in the gulph of deſtruction.

He would be a bold man who would venture to foretell how theſe affairs will end; but one thing, I am ſure, I may foretell, and that is, if you go on as you are doing, nine in ten of

you

you at leaſt, will rue the day when you let yourſelves be made the dupes and tools of a ſet of people, who, having nothing elſe to do, wiſh to make themſelves great and powerful at your coſt and expence. You are ever ready enough to believe thoſe who put bad things into your heads, though it is plain enough to common ſenſe that they have their own ends in doing it; but you won't liſten to ſuch people as me, who can have no ends to anſwer but the general good of us all; and who are doing all we can to make you think wiſely and rightly about theſe and other matters.

And ſo I will finiſh what I have to ſay to you with an old fable:

Once upon a time there was an iſland inhabited by lions, and wolves, and foxes, and hounds, who all lived together for ſome time peaceably and quietly. The lions had the chief power, both becauſe they were the ſtrongeſt, and becauſe they protected the country from the hyenas, which were a fierce and deſtructive animal, that would ſwim over in bodies and plunder, and do great miſchief. But at length the wolves and foxes having grown fat on the plenty of game they enjoyed under the lions protection, grew alſo wanton and wicked, (as it is well known brutes will do) and wiſhed to drive the lions out, not conſidering that they themſelves would then be the prey of the hyenas and other neighbouring beaſts. But they knew they could do nothing without the help of the hounds; they therefore made uſe of all their tricks and cunning to gain them to their ſide, knowing that they could eaſily keep them under, when once the lions were driven out. Now the hounds being honeſt, ignorant, and generous animals, let themſelves be eaſily perſuaded to attack the lions,

who

who being of a brave and humane ſpirit, were at firſt unwilling to hurt the poor hounds, becauſe they well knew how they were made fools of by the others; but at laſt being provoked beyond all bearing, they fell furiouſly upon them, and deſtroyed great numbers. The hounds began now to perceive that the foxes and wolves, who never ſhewed themſelves in the fights and battles, were knaves and cowardly raſcals. They accordingly went to the lions, and begged pardon, and were forgiven by that noble animal, on condition that they would deliver up their adviſers, who were all taken and hanged, to the ſatisfaction of all parties; and peace and plenty were reſtored to the iſland.

A FARMER.

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